

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

Friday
November 18, 1977

Wouldn't it be fun...

There's one in every crowd. That chap thinks, "Wouldn't it be funny to..." Fill that in with something destructive.

For instance: The other day some enterprising fellow decided to set fire to a bunch of printed notices hanging in the stairwell of the new Science Laboratory Building. Damage? Oh, a little smoke smell, some blistered paint that'll have to be replaced, a little extra mess for the maids to clean up. No three-alarm fires or dozen charred bodies.

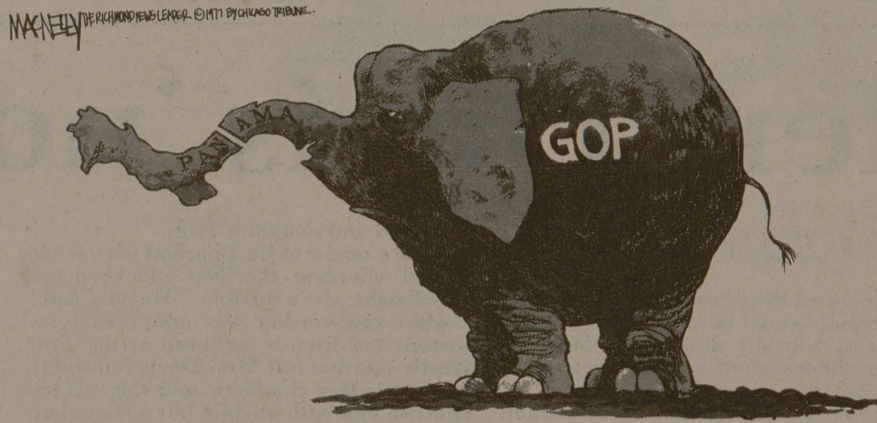
So, if nothing major was destroyed and nobody was killed, or even well maimed, why even mention it? Because it's just that kind of asinine stunt that does kill a dozen people or destroy a building.

Apparently setting fire to bulletin boards and trash cans and rooms filled with newspaper comes under the category of "good bull" to some people. But it also comes under the heading of arson. That's ARSON, as in criminal.

This university had several fires on campus this last summer, the most serious doing several thousand dollars damage to the basement of the Memorial Student Center. None of those fires caused any really serious damage or injured anyone. But then who wants that first time to happen? University officials began long overdue renovations in fire safety procedures and equipment after those fires. But those precautions are not nearly as effective as that ounce of prevention.

So the next time you catch yourself saying "Wouldn't it be funny..." stop and think how really unfunny it might be.

L.R.L.



Down the tubes

A proposed cutback in Amtrak service doesn't make sense in light of Amtrak's initial goal: to provide continuing passenger rail service to the public.

The federal Amtrak agency was created five years ago in an effort to save the dying rail passenger service. Hefty government subsidies were the only answer. Now Congress has turned its back on its commitment. It has restored only \$8 million of more than \$57 million lopped off earlier from Amtrak's \$545 million subsidy request.

Without adequate subsidies Amtrak cannot survive. The hand that was intended to keep Amtrak alive is now slowly squeezing it to death.

Chicago Daily News

Closing up the open administration

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON—The Lance affair is yesterday's headline, and as everyone knows, nothing is more outdated than that. But before you flip complacently to the next topic, note these two sentences from the just-issued study by Common Cause, the public-interest organization:

"If it had not been Bert Lance and the Committee on Governmental Affairs, it would have been another nominee and another committee. The Senate confirmation process was a national disaster waiting to happen."

Strong words, but the harsh judgement would not be denied by many senators, especially those involved in the Lance affair. The Common Cause study provides a powerful prod for the passage of the kind of remedial legislation proposed by Sens. Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.) and Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.) to spare themselves, the Senate and the country the embarrassment of another Lance affair.

Lance was an embarrassment to the Senate, as well as the administration, because the financial practices that eventually caused him to resign went undetected in the charade that passed for a confirmation hearing last January.

Yet the Common Cause study shows that the Lance hearing was a model of procedural purity and care compared to those in which most of President Carter's senior appointees were confirmed. Lance's confirmation met six of the 11 criteria suggested for a full, fair test of an appointee's suitability. Only two of the 11 cabinet members had even as rigorous an examination as did Lance. And in some cases, the procedure can hardly be dignified with the name of a confirmation process.

Washington window

If you want an example of that process, take the case of Bob Bergland, the practicing farmer and member of the House of Representatives who was named as Secretary of Agriculture.

So far as is known, Bergland has no Lance-type problems. Common Cause is careful to say it is not passing judgement on his qualifications to run the farm programs.

But the Senate Agriculture Committee, which confirmed him after a one-day hearing, did not put him under oath did not make public his financial disclosure statement did not require any public resolution

of his potential conflict of interest as a farm owner did not require him to discuss in public his past or future political activities.

The committee posed no written policy questions to him in advance. It issued no formal report explaining why it recommended his confirmation. It did not even make the transcript hearing available in print to other senators or the public until six weeks after Bergland had been confirmed. There was no record vote in committee or on the Senate floor on his approval.

Nor was this unusual. Of the first 50 major Carter appointees who came before the Senate, Common Cause says only 14 were required to make public financial disclosures. Only ten (including Lance) had more than one day of hearings. Only six had their hearing transcripts in print at the time the Senate confirmed them.

That kind of record merits the Common Cause comment that, "The Senate confirmation process is a rubber stamp machine."

The remedies, some of which are embodied in the Ribicoff-Percy bill, are as obvious as they are overdue. The Senate needs to develop a uniform disclosure form on both finances and political activities of

nominees. Only a few committees now have such forms.

It needs to conduct its own careful investigation of the background and qualifications of presidential appointees. Ribicoff, Percy and Common Cause believe this task is beyond the capacity of existing committee staffs. They propose creation of a new Office of Nominations to do this work for all the Senate committees.

Whether such an addition to the burgeoning Senate bureaucracy is really needed may be debatable. But there can be no argument about the need for an independent appraisal of the nominee's qualifications—not just a passing nod at the President's recommendations.

Finally, the process of confirmation needs to be made more deliberate so that questions can be asked, reports written transcripts read, and reactions weighed—before the Senate gives its assent to the President's choice.

Those changes will not draw the headlines the Lance affair received. But they would prevent its recurrence, and that would be a good day's work for the Senate and the country.

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Top of the News

State

War of women in Houston

The National Women's Conference, in unprecedented meetings on American Women, opens a new battleground in the escalating war between feminists and the conservative opponents of equal rights. An estimated 20,000 women are expected in Houston to go witness the four-day conference opening Friday. The women will discuss views as diverse as lesbianism and the Ku Klux Klan. The National Women's Conference, the first such meeting of its kind in American history, was funded by a \$5 million congressional appropriation with a mandate to answer the question: "What do women want?" A final document reporting the decisions the women make regarding such issues as ERA, abortion and lesbian rights, will be submitted to Congress and the president.

Nation

1902 irrigation law protested

Politicians, local officials and farmers predict economic disaster if the federal government enforces a 1902 law sharply restricting the amount of acreage eligible for irrigation from Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs. About 100 people attended an Interior Department hearing Wednesday to object to the law. Assistant U.S. Interior Secretary Robert Herbst conducted the hearing on the possibility of changing the 75-year-old law which restricts the size of farms receiving irrigation water to 160 acres for each resident family member.

Great American Smoke-Out

An estimated 5 million Americans kicked the habit—for 24 hours anyway. The American Cancer Society promoted a tobacco break Thursday for smokers coast-to-coast. The events of the "Great American Smoke-Out" ranged from the world's largest ashtray for depositing whole cigarettes in San Francisco, to bonfires in Detroit. The purpose of the campaign, supported by federal health agencies, is to focus national attention on the health hazards of tobacco and to encourage at least some of the nation's 54 million smokers to kick the habit.

Choice for elderly; eat or heat

A University of Michigan researcher predicts millions of the nation's elderly will shiver this winter, and some may face the grim choice of keeping warm or eating. Based on a study of Detroit's elderly poor last winter, Dr. Leon Pastalan said Wednesday about one-fifth of America's senior citizens will have heating problems this winter. Pastalan, head of the university's Institute of Gerontology, said a smaller number would have severe problems with money and heat. "About 1 or 2 percent will choose between eating and paying the utility bills," he said.

Shah of Iran leaves for Paris

The Shah of Iran has concluded a demonstration-scarred trip to the United States, hopeful that a stalled U.S. weapons order would be approved by the nation that asked him to help hold down the international price of oil. The monarch and his empress left for Paris Wednesday night leaving behind several hundred supporters bused to Andrews Air Force base to cheer farewell.

World

Syria worried about Sadat's trip

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat says he will accept an invitation to go to Israel, but he is running into disagreement with Syria over his unprecedented peace mission. Sadat came to Damascus Wednesday to persuade Syrian President Hafez Assad that his expected trip to Jerusalem did not mean Egypt was ready to break ranks with Syria, its principal Arab ally.

Biko chained, naked before death

Black activist Steve Biko was shackled and kept naked just before his death in a South African prison cell. Col. Piet Gossen, security chief in Port Elizabeth, said these measures were taken to prevent him from committing suicide or injuring himself. The official autopsy showed Biko died Sept. 12 of severe brain damage. Biko's family has taken the matter to court.

Weather

Cloudy and mild today and tomorrow with east to southeasterly winds 5-10 mph. High both days upper 70s. Low tonight low 60s. 20-30 percent chance of rain.

The Battalion

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Iranian students oppose Shah's U.S. visit

Within the next few days the American people are going to witness the unfolding of a series of events which will further point to the existence and implementation of an elaborate plan involving the Carter administration and the regime of the Shah of Iran, designed to hoodwink public opinion during the dictator's state visit here on Nov. 15, 1977.

The dilemma facing President Carter and the Shah is that the American people have come to know about the Iranian regime for what it really is: a brutal, repressive dictatorship. And for Carter, who has attempted to portray himself as an alleged "crusader for human rights, it is going to be quite difficult to justify his strong support of the Shah to the American people. After all, it is not that easy to ignore the fact that the Shah holds more than 100,000 political prisoners; that more than 500 Iranian patriots have been murdered by the Shah's secret police (SAVAK) since March 1971; that the Iranian regime enjoys the grim distinction of being rated as one of the top

five worst offenders of human rights throughout the world; etc., etc.

These are facts well established through years of effort by the Iranian student movement abroad, as well as scores of reports released by such organizations as the Amnesty International, International Commission of Jurists, International League for Human Rights, and many others.

Reader's Forum

Yet despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Carter administration in collusion with the Iranian regime is presently engaged in a desperate attempt to portray the brutal and inhumane rule of torture and bayonets in Iran as a model of progress and prosperity! How?

SAVAK agents in the U.S. surfaced since mid-October in various schools, universities, and Iranian communities in an attempt to recruit a large "welcome crowd"

for the Shah. SAVAK has been offering \$300 to \$600 cash, a round trip air fare to Washington, D.C., and free hotel accommodation to anyone willing to cheer for the Shah! Also, several IRAN AIR 747's filled with SAVAK agents are arriving here to insure that Shah receives a "proper welcome."

This monetary inspired greeting is an attempt to create a false image in the minds of the general public witnessing an artificial welcome. On the other hand, all out efforts are being made to prevent student bodies and general opposition from congregating in front of the White House to voice their disapproval of the Shah and his regime.

Not until late October was the news of the Shah's exact date of arrival made public through the news media. Before then only the Iranian regime and the U.S. government knew the exact date, i.e. Nov. 15. But "surprisingly, between Oct. 11-13, several "organizations" filed applications for per-

mission to hold demonstrations on Nov. 15 in front of the White House, specifically announcing their intention to support the Shah. Since they have claimed to bring a large number of demonstrators, authorities were using regulations such as space limitation to "legally" refuse permission for demonstrations against the Shah's regime.

A large number of the American public is already aware of this dictator's tyrannical rule and any vain attempt to white-wash and cover up this fact, will only result in further exposing Mr. Carter's real intentions of the "campaign for human rights."

—IRANIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION AT TAMU

This commentary was prepared by the Texas A&M Iranian Student Association and represents that group's opinions. It does not reflect the opinions or policies of this newspaper.

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"ONE-HUNDRED DOLLARS APIECE FOR FOUR TICKETS ON THE 50 YARD LINE FOR THE TEXAS GAME! TH'ONLY FIFTY-YARD LINE TICKETS I'VE EVER SEEN WERE IN A MUSEUM!"

Letters to the editor

Bonfire needs help

Editor: Will someone please tell me what has happened to the great Aggie spirit at this university. One of the greatest traditions A&M has is being constructed behind Duncan Dining Hall and nobody seems to care. Everyday there are just enough men out there for one crew and that is pretty bad turnout for our student body.

The Red Pots can't build it by themselves, they need our help. Did the Twelfth Man give up after Arkansas or will it stand firm for the U. of H.? There isn't much time left so unite in your dorms, apartments or just with a few friends for a few hours. Every man is needed. Now.

—Pam Bielefeld, '78

High-speed gravel

Editor: On the freeway at high speeds, trucks carrying sand, gravel and rocks, tend to lose part of their load along the way. These fragments, which seem insignificant while stationary, do much damage to other vehicles on the highways. I feel a law should be established making it mandatory for truck drivers to cover their loads before traveling on highways.

On one occasion, I was driving back from Huntsville. A gravel truck passed me going the opposite direction from me. The wind

created by his tremendous speed sent gravel pouring off the top. I heard the rocks hit and found they cracked my windshield in two places. That night I found that two of my four headlights had been broken also. His negligence cost me eight dollars plus a broken windshield. All of this could have been avoided if his load had been covered.

I used to do a lot of motorcycle riding on the highway. The wind in my face is a wonderful experience. This experience can be saddened by a careless trucker. My helmet and bike have numerous scratches on them from flying rocks and gravel. As of now I have not been hit in the eyes, although I have had my eyes filled with sand from passing trucks.

So in conclusion, I feel it would be helpful to travelers' health and their pocketbooks to make truck drivers cover their loads.

—Alan Jones, '81

Up the ramps again

Editor: To Doug Luecke, '81, re: "bike ramps." There are no bike ramps on Texas A&M's campus, they are wheelchair ramps for the handicapped. Mark up one for the uninformed, strike one for the handicapped.

—Stan Stanfield, '78